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ABSTRACT

Vocational and technical schools can capitalize upon cooperative faculty source programs. These institutions should also take the initiative and propose modified second career cooperative arrangements with companies in their own geographic regions. A few major corporations now have unique programs that provide financial incentives for potential retirees to begin second careers in teaching. A study was undertaken to identify new and unique programs directly involving personnel. Forty-four major corporations including 28 top Fortune 100 were surveyed. A selected sample of large corporations having acknowledged post-secondary cooperative programs was identified. The data was obtained from among those corporations most likely to have (1) the financial resources; (2) the acknowledged support for post-secondary institutions; and (3) the personnel resources to conduct new ventures of this type. This study focused upon providing full-time faculty arrangements. Three types of full-time source programs are discussed: (1) reemployment assistance efforts (qualified surplus personnel are placed in vocational and technical schools); (2) faculty leaves (employees spend one year teaching in a postsecondary institution); and (3) second career programs (retirees assume a second career in academia). Implications of the study include: (1) through greater awareness, vocational and technical institutions may be able to capitalize upon various cooperative faculty source programs; (2) the current generation of potential second career participants have had outstanding success in their job settings; (3) consideration must also be given to the difference in occupational and organizational climates; and (4) the second career programs appear to offer considerable potential. (CB)

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Cooperative Second Career Programs

Quality Teachers for Vocational and Technical Colleges and Universities

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Introduction

Post-secondary vocational and technical colleges in the United States heavily emphasize the practical application of knowledge and skills. Given this orientation, there is a strong desire to employ instructors who have had extensive prior experience in business and industry. However, the wide discrepancy between the greater financial incentives provided by business and the much lower compensation offered by the vocational and technical institutions has made the recruitment of experienced quality full time faculty very difficult.

A very few selected major corporations are supporting second career programs, for their own employees who are nearing retirement, and are encouraging such individuals to consider teaching in post-secondary schools. These programs, if expanded, offer great potential as sources of highly experienced successful individuals who might well become a new cadery of teachers in the vocational and technical schools.

Vocational and Technical Institutions

Within the United States, the designations vocational schools and technical schools can prompt a degree of confusion. Vocational and technical schools can be separate entities or combined institutions. There are vocational high schools, technical high schools, and vocational-technical high schools; all are secondary institutions. Also popular are the vocational and technical community colleges which offer two year terminal programs at the post-secondary level. These are quite separate from most major post-secondary colleges and universities which offer undergraduate (four year) and sometimes graduate majors in many technical areas.

Misunderstandings can also result from the use of the term college. Colleges, within the United States, are post-secondary institutions. The term is often used interchangeably with the word university, although there is a generally definable difference. Thus the vocational technical high school, technical community college, and the technical college, are all distinctly different.

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This paper will focus only upon the post-secondary vocational and technical institutions, and primarily the two year institutions oriented toward the direct practical application of skills. The students attending these institutions have completed their high school diploma but have elected not to pursue an academic degree (e.g. B.A. or B.S., etc.) at a four year college or university.

Faculty Recruitment

Vocational and technical colleges often have difficulty recruiting qualified faculty from business and industry. Given their limited economic base, the academic institutions simply cannot compete financially for the services of successful, highly qualified personnel with extensive on-the-job experience. Many of these individuals, although potentially interested in teaching, are not willing to undergo the significant reduction in salaries, retirement contributions, health insurance, and the various other welfare benefits required.

Recruitment difficulties are not only associated with trying to lure those with extensive experience away from business and industry. Vocational and technical colleges are not having the desired level of success hiring minorities and women for the same financially oriented reasons.

Most institutions do employ such technical personnel as part-time instructors. Although often very effective teachers, the program continuity and institutional service provided by full time personnel are usually absent. Thus, the core of full time vocational and technical college faculty often includes (1) those who may have the technical expertise, degree, or skills, but who lack the desired level of on-the-job work experience, (2) those who were successful in the business or industrial environment but found the academic life more suited to their personal needs, and (3) those who were less than successful in the outside world and the vocational or technical schools provided a viable alternative.

The ideal teacher is one who has (1) the technical knowledge and skills in the required area, (2) a supporting academic degree, and (3) a broad base of on-the-job experience at various levels associated with that technical area. Even the undergraduate and graduate technical colleges and universities find it difficult to attract the experts with extensive practical experience. These individuals are much too valuable to their respective companies and are rewarded accordingly. Thus, the faculty of these major universities are likely to be heavy on knowledge, skills, and degrees, but lighter on quality, broad based, and recent on-the-job experience.

One should not have the mistaken impression that the quality of the faculty at vocational and technical colleges is wanting. Quite the contrary. Most vocational and technical colleges have a solid, well qualified core of instructors.

However, there are few institutions anywhere that could not always use a few more teachers with outstanding qualifications. This paper is approaching the issue from that perspective.

Data Source

A survey of 44 of the major corporations in the United States, including 28 of the top Fortune 100, was conducted to identify new and unique programs whereby such corporations might be the source of full time faculty for post-secondary institutions. The data for the just included study was obtained through direct personal contact with the appropriate unit, e.g. personnel, human resources, retirement, etc., of the respective companies.

A selected sample of large corporations having acknowledged post-secondary cooperative programs was identified. From this basis the study was expanded, as the knowledgeable resources in each company recommended others they thought would be the most likely to participate in such activities. The leading companies of various other industrial segments were included to ensure a broader base for the survey. Thus, the data was obtained from among those large corporations most likely to have (1) the financial resources (2) the acknowledged support for post-secondary institutions, and (3) the personnel resources to conduct new ventures of this type.

The objective of the study was to identify new and unique programs directly involving personnel. Therefore, financial grants which simply provided the means for academic institutions to hire their own faculty were not considered.

Common Practices

A limited review is presented for those not fully familiar with current staffing practices in the United States. These can be divided into two basic formats: (1) part-time involvement and (2) providing full time faculty. This study focused only upon the latter arrangements. The major categories of full time source programs are: (1) reemployment assistance, (2) sabbatical or faculty leaves, and (3) second careers. Only the second careers concept can be considered new or unique.

The most common procedure whereby instructors with strong on-the-job performance histories are employed by vocational and technical colleges is through the part-time system. Highly qualified individuals are hired to teach one or two specific courses on a temporary or even an ongoing temporary basis. This procedure is sometimes used more often than desirable or even necessary. The salary and fringe benefits package (health insurance, retirement contributions, etc.) per course are usually less for a part-time or adjunct faculty than it would be for the same proportional load of a full timer. Therefore, through the use of part-time instructors, the institution may hire two full time equivalents (F.T.E.) for the same cost of hiring one full time individual.

This part-time system is also advantageous for the instructor. He now has the status of association with an academic institution, has a small additional income, but still enjoys the substantial salary and benefits package accompanying his regular corporate job. Thus, the system works reasonably well for both the part timer and the institutions.

There are distinct disadvantages. The overall load does become heavier for the regular full timers. They must now assume a proportionally greater share of the student advisement, committee activities, and other ongoing operational functions.

Full time faculty sometimes become available under much more unfortunate situations. These arise when qualified personnel are unable to continue in their desired industrial positions and must seek reemployment elsewhere. This usually occurs through no fault of the individual, but rather as a result of economic downturns or corporate reorganizations. The product or service, with which various positions were associated, simply may have been discontinued.

When these conditions arise, many corporations offer affected employees job counseling and help them identify positions elsewhere. Although certainly not a normal situation, simple awareness may, on rare occasions, result in the acquisition of selected highly qualified faculty.

The second much more common practice, whereby vocational and technical colleges obtain full time instructional personnel from business and industry, are the sabbatical or faculty leave programs. Some major corporations have established procedures where qualified personnel can take a leave of absence and teach in a post-secondary institutions. This is usually limited to one or two semesters and is seldom for more than two years. In most instances, the new temporary faculty member still draws his or her salary and fringe benefits from the original corporate employer.

Thus, the vocational and technical college acquires an outstanding full time instructor for a complete year and with minimal financial cost. At the end of that year however, the individual is gone and will not likely be replaced. The college has gained a significant temporary supplement, but it is only temporary.

Second Careers

A unique cooperative concept was identified whereby corporations provide the opportunity for highly talented individuals to assume a second career teaching in post-secondary institutions. Two very similar programs, the Du Pont Company's Second Careers in Academia and I.B.M.'s Technical Academic Careers are excellent examples. The major features of these programs are:

1. The individual retiree/faculty member will:

   a. have an offer for at least two years of full time employment from a post-secondary academic institution.

   b. retire from the company within a set period of time; e.g. two months before or after becoming employed.

   c. remain in the position for two years if the company supplement is to be maintained.

2. The corporations will:

   a. provide the regular retirement benefits.

   b. pay the retiree/faculty member a percentage of the individual's last company salary for the two years of the academic contract.

   c. provide transition counseling and resource information.

3. The academic institutions will:

   a. be a post-secondary school.

   b. provide a contract offer of full time employment for a period of two years.

   c. provide a minimum salary of at least $15,000 annually for each of the two years.

There are obvious advantages for all parties concerned. The post-secondary institutions are able to acquire highly competent teachers with extensive on-the-job experience. At least for the initial two years, the associated salary and benefits costs would be less than for most regular faculty. This is even more significant if one considers the high rate that would be needed to attract the individual under normal conditions. After the two year period, the institutions and new faculty members are free to negotiate their assumed continued relationships.

The companies also find the program advantageous for a variety of reasons. They are able to assist in the placement of very competent faculty in academic institutions from where later graduates may be employed. Thus, there is an increased mutual awareness of the need for quality programs and good teaching. The companies also gain from the positive public relations with both the institutions and communities. There may also be tax advantages under certain conditions. The companies might be able to experience a degree of financial savings. This may or may not be a major item for it depends upon the years left before retirement and the cost of the person's replacement.

Individuals participating in the second careers programs have a great deal to gain. They can take early retirement from the corporation and yet acquire a second income. Many will attempt to find positions within the same geographic area so they can continue to reside in their present homes. Of course the major advantage is the opportunity to begin a second career as a professor. The individuals are distinctly attractive to the institutions because of the two year salary supplement. Given this aspect and the continuing company retirement benefits, the major financial sacrifice normally associated with such an occupational change is eliminated. After the two year period, and the resulting experience, the new retiree/professor may or may not wish to negotiate a continuing position.

Implications

Through greater awareness, vocational and technical institutions may be able to capitalize upon the various cooperative faculty source programs. Those utilizing the second career concept may be particularly appealing. Academic institutions should now take the initiative and propose such arrangements with relevant corporations within their regions. Thus, the institutions might establish ongoing relationships that could significantly upgrade the prior on-the-job experience of their new teaching faculty.

The current generation of potential second career participants have had outstanding success in their job settings. However, given the criteria existing during the period of their initial corporate employment, they might not have needed or obtained an advanced technical degree. The post-secondary schools may then wish to place their perceived need for academic credentials in a more appropriate perspective.

Consideration must also be given to the difference in occupational and organizational climates. The academic administrator may be unfamiliar with the often more structured and formal procedures in many large corporations. Conversely, the retiree/professor may find the post-secondary system somewhat confusing. This discrepancy can easily lead to unnecessary and unfortunate mutual misunderstandings.

The second career programs appear to offer considerable potential particularly for faculty recruitment by post-secondary vocational and technical institutions. It is a refreshingly unique concept well worth pursuing.